Intl. Inform. & Libr. Rev. (2000), **32**, 69–80
doi:10.1006/iilr.2000.0126
Available online at http://www.idealibrary.com on IDEAL®

Financial Problems in University Libraries: the Turkish Case

AHMET ÇELIK*

ABSTRACT

The scarcity of financial resources is the main obstacle to improve university library services in both developed and developing countries. Examples from different countries show that lack of financial resources is an international problem. It is clear that the worldwide crisis in the economy in the 1970s negatively affected the universities and their libraries of both developed and developing countries. Librarians have therefore struggled to overcome the finance problem for several years. Today, university libraries in different countries, either developed or developing, are still complaining about the lack of financial resources for their services. But, their problems are not identical. It is seen that the universities of developed countries have found alternative income resources and have transferred some of them to their libraries. When looking at university libraries in developing countries, in addition to scarcity of financial resources, the lack of library policy regarding fiscal resources is an another barrier. Turkish university libraries are also suffering from similar problems. In this paper, the current trends related to financial resources of university libraries in a global context are described and then the situation in Turkey more specifically is discussed.

© 2000 Academic Press

INTRODUCTION

Any type of organization, either for-profit or non-profit, needs two basic resources to fulfil its responsibility: qualified manpower and sufficient financial resources; without them it is not possible to maintain a healthy organization. University libraries and their parent organizations, universities, also need such resources to carry out their duties. In this regard,

*Hacettepe University Department of Librarianship, Ankara, Turkey.

1057–2317/00/030069 + 12 $35.00/0 © 2000 Academic Press

money is an essential element for purchasing materials, paying staff salaries, and the other necessary expenses in the library.

When reviewing the literature, it is seen that every kind of library, including university libraries, complains about the scarcity of financial resources allocated to libraries. They assert that they can not fulfil their obligations because of financial limitations. Turkish university librarians are not happy with the current financial situation either. The statement that "financial resources allocated to university libraries in Turkey are not enough, therefore the services given to users are not satisfactory" is correct but not that meaningful. University libraries in western countries are also complaining about their financial situation. Therefore, at this point, it is necessary to answer the following question to understand the essence of the matter: is the lack of financial resources in university libraries a local or an international problem? According to the answer given, different suggestions can be asserted. Therefore, first of all, it is better to investigate the universal characteristics of the "money problem" in university libraries.

State of the Art in Financing University Libraries

Rapid developments took place in western economies after World War II. These developments provided the widespread applications of the "welfare state" in which the government supplies more funds for social purposes. Friedman[1] mentioned that the UK government increased its social expenditures between 1960 and 1980 by 170%. Social expenditures increased five-fold in the USA in the period between 1960 and 1980, and more than four-fold in Italy between 1951 and 1980. The Cold War between Eastern and Western Blocks also helped western research institutions to obtain greater amounts of research funds from their governments. This conflict, for instance in the USA, provided a large amount of financial support for higher education.[2]

The financial resources allocated to libraries reached their highest point in the period between 1945 and 1973, which is also known as the "golden age" of librarianship. This era, on the other hand, witnessed the "information explosion" which caused enormous increases in book and journal publication. It was clearly understood that no library would be self-sufficient and the first library consortia, such as OCLC (1967), were established during that period.

[1] Friedman, R.R. (1987) Welfare states: a summary of trends. *In* Freedman, R.R., Gilbert, N. & Sherer, M. (Eds). *Modern welfare states.* New York. New York University Press.

[2] Magrath, C.P. (1997) Political control and funding in American universities. *In* Ash, M.G. (Ed.) *German universities, past and future.* Oxford. Berghahn Books.

At the beginning of the 1970s, some economic and social problems in conjunction with political instability in several western countries negatively affected the world economy. The result of the economic crisis was a high annual rate of inflation.[3] Economies of both developed and developing countries suffered from the crisis. Economic and social balances, especially in developing countries, nearly collapsed. The most important result of the economic crisis was the transition from the idea of the welfare state to a market-driven economy. The fiscal policies of Margaret Thatcher in the UK and that of Ronald Reagan in the USA in the 1980s caused the decline of public expenditures for social purposes. As Friedman said: "By the 1980s, the welfare state had entered a period of transition from a rapid growth cycle to a cycle of stability".[4] The new policy also affected governmental support for universities and, in turn, their libraries in western economies. For instance, in the USA federal support for universities declined from 18% in 1961 to 10% of their total revenues from 1982 through 1987.[5] According to a report prepared by OECD, in many OECD countries the financial situation of higher education deteriorated from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s.[6] Ziderman and Albrecht[7] summarized the situation in developing countries as: "the financial crisis in universities has led to aggregate declines in unit spending throughout the developing world. Between 1975 and 1985 alone this decline exceeded 50 percent; the decline continued throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s". The crisis also affected university libraries. As academic libraries received 4·1% of total expenditures in higher education in 1970–1971, this amount decreased to 3·1% by 1989–1990 in the USA.[8] Although traditionally strong, university libraries in western countries began to complain about their revenue sources, since their incomes were not enough to cope with the price increases in the publication sector. For example, the price of periodicals increased about 700% in the USA, the largest publication exporter in the world, between 1971 and 1990. This was much higher than the inflation rate of 237% for the same period.[9] Rapid price increases together with the declining ratio of budgets caused severe problems for the university libraries in nearly all countries, especially in developing

[3] Lowe, R. (1993) *The Welfare State in Britain since 1945*. London. Macmillan.

[4] Friedman (1987) *Op. cit.*

[5] Wilson, R.H. (1993) *States and the economy: policymaking and decentralization*. Werhard. Praeger.

[6] OECD (1990) *Financing higher education: current patterns*. Paris. OECD.

[7] Ziderman, A. & Albrecht, D. (1995) *Financing universities in developing countries*. Washington, DC. The Palmer Press.

[8] Goudy, F.W. (1993) Academic libraries and six percent solution: a twenty-year financial overview. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, **19**(4), pp. 212–215.

[9] *Ibid.*

countries. Shortages of foreign exchange in these countries prevented university libraries from keeping their collections current. According to a study of 18 universities in Africa, whereas universities spent 8·5% of their budgets on research, books, and library acquisitions in 1984, this figure had fallen to 3% by 1990.[10] Under such influences, libraries of both developed and developing nations began to revise their purchasing policies. With regard to the new policy, the following precautions have been taken by libraries:

- cancelling subscription of some serials,
- purchasing fewer books,
- finding alternative ways.

To obtain sufficient funds and to supply a good service, librarians have struggled for several years. Roberts' article[11] is a classic example, which calls attention to the financing of university libraries. Librarians of different countries believed that some standards (e.g. the funds allocated to library, collection size, manpower, facilities for users, etc.) were necessary. They attempted to establish such standards to guarantee the minimum service.

The attempts to establish standards relating to university libraries have a long history in western countries. For instance, in the USA, a committee of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) suggested that 5% of the university budget should be allocated to the library.[12] The Parry Committee in the UK suggested 6%.[13] In the 1980s, as the economic crisis was affecting libraries negatively, librarians and their associations struggled to obtain enough financial resources for university libraries. The Association for College and Research Libraries (ACRL), in this respect, set guidelines for maintaining good library service for users, which stated that: "the library's appropriation shall be six percent of the total institutional budget for educational and general purposes".[14] Although they have never (except for a very few libraries) reached the proportion established by ACRL, university libraries in the USA have been less effected by the financial crisis, in comparison to libraries of developing countries. University libraries in the USA and their parent organizations were able to find alternative resources for libraries. On

[10] Saint, W.D. (1992) *Universities in Africa: strategies for stabilization and revitalization.* Washington, DC. World Bank.

[11] Roberts, N. (1980) Financing of university libraries in the United Kingdom. *In* Thompson, J. (Ed.) *University library history.* New York. K.G. Saur.

[12] Lynch, B.P. (1982) University library standards. *Library Trends*, **31** (1), pp. 33–47.

[13] Humphreys, K.W. (1972) Standards for libraries in Great Britain. *Library Trends*, **21** (2), pp. 312–329.

[14] Standards for college libraries (1986) *College and research libraries news* (March 1986) 47, 199.

the other hand, the continuing economic prosperity of the 1990s has enabled state governments to allocate more funds for higher education in the USA.[15]

While universities and their libraries in developed countries were struggling with financial problems, the situation in developing countries was worse. The developing countries, in addition to the problems faced by developed countries, have another serious obstacle: lack of currency, which is essential to purchase materials from foreign, especially western, countries. For instance, while in the 1970s, the University of Ibadan (Nigeria) subscribed to over 5000 journals; by 1990 this number had fallen to about 300.[16] Under the influence of western examples, the funding formula for university libraries has been recommended in some developing countries. Nevertheless, such recommendations are rarely implemented. For example, Rosenberg[17] has cited some examples from African countries. In Ghana, whereas the Universities Rationalization Committee recommended in 1988 that 10% of university revenue be allocated to the library, actual allocation was 2% in 1992.[18] This example shows that establishing standards alone is not enough to solve financial problems in university libraries.

University Education in Turkey: a General Outlook

Developments in Turkish higher education

Although it has a long history through "medrese" education, the first Turkish university, called Darülfünun (house of sciences), was established in Istanbul in 1900.[19] The contemporary Turkish Republic, founded in 1923, emerged after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and tried to make various reforms to reach western standards. In the first years of the Republican period, education was given top priority under state intervention and it was recognized as a public good.

Darülfünun was abolished in 1933 as part of university reform and Istanbul University was established the same year. This university remained the only university in the country until Istanbul Technical

[15] Schmidt, P. (1998) Higher education has moved beyond recovery from the decline of the early 1990s to a period of modest-but-real growth. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, **XLV**(14), p. A27.

[16] Saint (1992) *Op. cit.*

[17] Rosenberg, D. (1998) The financing of university libraries in Africa. *Information Development*, **14**(2), pp. 73–78.

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] Gedikoğlu, T. (1991) Turkey. *In* Altbach, P. (Ed.) *International higher education: an encyclopedia*. Chicago. St James Press.

University was established in 1944. At the beginning, the German tradition, in which the university buildings were located in various parts of the city, had become dominant in Turkish universities. In this model, each faculty and nearly every department had their own libraries.[20] After World War II, as a parallel to the closer political and economic relationship developed with the USA, the American style of university system became popular in Turkey. In the American system, each university is normally served by a single library.[21] Thus, the idea of one main library for a university has become effective among Turkish librarians. The number of universities reached 7 in 1960 and 19 in 1980. Until 1981, each university had administrative and scientific autonomy.

Turkish higher education was reorganized in 1981 by the Law of Higher Education, which created a supervisory body for higher education called the Council of Higher Education (CHE). The primary responsibility of CHE is to plan and co-ordinate Turkish higher education. The new act made it possible to establish private universities. As seen from Table (I), at the beginning of 1998–1999 academic year, there are 53 public and 19 private universities in Turkey, with 1 477 619 undergraduate and 72 284 graduate students, employing 62 897 faculty members. As non-profit institutions, private universities also get state support. But, the amount of state assistance does not exceed 45% of the total expenditures of the private university. Under the auspices of CHE, each university consists of faculties and 4-year schools, offering undergraduate and graduate programs. Four-year schools emphasize vocational education. In addition, 2-year vocational schools offer pre-bachelor's degrees. In the academic year of 1998–1999, there are 387 bachelor's and 196 pre-bachelor's level programs operating in the universities.[22]

Table I shows that the public sector holds a primary role in the provision of higher education in Turkey.

Financial aspects of Turkish higher education

University libraries in Turkey, as everywhere, are dependent on their parent organizations financially. Therefore, the financial situation of the university is the main factor that determines the library's income. Contemporary universities have several major problems such as money, faculty, student, curriculum, personnel, etc.,[23] but money almost always gets the first priority among others.

[20] Çelik, A. (1990). Türkiye'de üniversite kütüphaneleri bilgi ağı kurulmasina ilişkin sorunlar [The problems related to establishing library networks in Turkey]. Ph.D. Thesis, Ankara, Hacettepe University.

[21] Cardozier, V.R. (1992) *American higher education: an international perspective.* Avebury. Gower.

[22] Higher Education Council (1999) Statistics [online], http://yok.gov.tr [9 October 1999].

[23] Çelik, A. (1995) University libraries in Turkey. *Turkish Librarianship*, **9**(3), pp. 241–244.

TABLE I

Turkish universities at the beginning of 1998–1999 academic year

Type of university	Number of university	Number of teaching staff	Student		Books in university libraries
			Under graduate	Graduate	
Public	53	59 804	1 450 390*	70 671	4 543 946
Private	19	3093	27 229	1 613	433 822
Total	72	62 897	1 477 619	72 284	4 977 768

* Including the students in Open University.

Source: Ministry of National Education, General Directorate of Higher Education, *Cumhuriyetin 75. Yilinda Yükseköğretim [Higher Education in the 75th Anniversary of the Turkish Republic]*, 1998, pp. 375–514.

Almost all universities in Turkey, either public or private, get public financial support in varying degrees. The financial resources of public universities, which enroll about 98% of all university students, come from:

- state appropriations through the annual state budget,
- income generated by the universities,
- student contributions, and
- donations.

As of the 1998 fiscal year, the shares of total university budgets were realized as following: state funds, 62%; income generated by universities, 33%; and student contributions, 5%.[24] These figures show that public universities in Turkey are largely dependent on state funds. The figures also indicate that student fees have very little place in the university's income. Compared to some other countries, the student contribution is very low in Turkey. As a public good, education is supported by governments everywhere. But, student contributions, as they benefit from education, are also necessary. For instance in the USA, federal and state appropriations to higher education was $59 billion whereas students paid $19 billion in 1994.[25] In Turkey, by 1997, government funds to universities were about USD 1·7 billion, while student contributions were about USD 150 million.[26] This point will be more important in

[24] Higher Education Council (1999) *Op. cit.*

[25] Magrath (1997) *Op. cit.*

[26] *Resmi Gazete* [Official Gazette], 7 July 1999.

coming years, as state appropriations to education are proportionally declining. For example, some 13·1% of the state budget was allocated to education in 1983 whereas the percentage declined to 10·1% in 1997.[27] It is expected that this tendency will continue in the future.

University Libraries in Turkey

Public university libraries in Turkey are officially named as "library and documentation centres". In the 1930s and 1940s decentralized library structures were widespread. After World War II, as mentioned before, the idea of centralized library services spread among Turkish librarians. Nevertheless, in practice, there are both centralized and decentralized library structures, the latter being especially seen in older universities. As of the 1997–1998 academic year, there were 970 persons working in public university libraries, with and 276 of them having a degree in librarianship.[28] Table I shows the number of books located in these libraries. It can be said that both the number of librarians and books in university libraries are not sufficient.

The library is governed by a librarian, called the "head of the library and documentation centre", who is responsible for preparing the library budget and submitting it to the university president. A major part of the library's income comes from its parent organization. Revenues from donations and from fees charged for different services offered by the library are negligible.

Table II shows the budgets of universities and their libraries for different years. The crucial question here, as Roberts[29] pointed out, is: "how much should the host organisation be spending on library and information support?"

As seen in Table II there are considerable annual increases in library budgets. But, it is also clear that the ratio of the library budget within the university budget is decreasing.

When we look at the universities separately, Table III shows statistics for ten chosen universities. The first five universities allocate higher percentages while the last five have lower percentages. Considerable differences exist among universities. Only Bosphorus and Middle East Technical Universities allocated sufficient funds for their libraries.[30]

[27] Higher Education Council (1999) *Op. cit.*

[28] Çakin, I. (1998) Üniversitelerimizin bilgiye erişim ortamlari: genel değerlendirme [Environments of information access in our universities: a general evaluation]. *Hacettepe University Journal of Faculty of Letters* (special issue for 75th Anniversary of Turkish Republic). pp. 37–67.

[29] Roberts, S.A. (1998) *Financial and cost management for libraries and information services*, 2nd edn. London. Bowker.

[30] The language of instruction is English in both universities.

TABLE II

Library budgets as a percentage of total budgets of public universities in Turkey (1995–1999)

Fiscal year	University budgets (USD)*	Library budgets (USD)	Ratio of library budgets to university budget (%)
1995	1 131 412 741	10 900 973	0·96
1996	1 515 869 747	12 876 408	0·84
1997	1 853 630 105	13 158 843	0·70
1998	1 898 801 115	12 903 529	0·67
1999	2 118 098 545	14 801 848	0·69

*Calculations for exchange rate between US$ and Turkish lira were made by the author, according to exchange rates in the beginning date of fiscal year.
Sources: Data gathered from the issues of the *Resmi Gazete* [Official Gazette] of January 8, 1985; January 5, 1990; January 7, 1995; May 2, 1996; December 29 1996; December 31 1997, and July 7, 1999.

TABLE III

The ratio of library budgets to university budgets in selected Turkish universities: 1998–1999 Academic year

Name of university	University budget (USD)	Library budget (USD)	Ratio (%)
Bosphorus	48 899 720	1 883 057	3.85
Middle East Technical	98 268 794	2 288 638	2.32
Istanbul Technical	90 247 694	1 883 057	2.08
Galatasaray	11 538 650	168 992	1.46
Yildiz Technical	39 245 473	502 148	1.27
Niğde	27 231 905	86 910	0.31
Inönü	52 963 063	159 335	0.30
Kocaeli	41 567 283	96 567	0.23
Thrace	53 897 349	120 708	0.22
Tigris	65 709 140	144 850	0.22

Source: Data gathered from *Resmi Gazete* [Official Gazette] dated December 31 1997, and calculations made by the author.

Apart from annual library budgets, these universities allocate extra funds to their libraries from different sources like foundations and alumni contributions. The universities of Istanbul Technical, Yildiz Technical, and Galatasaray allocated moderate funds, and the rest of the Turkish universities allocated insufficient resources for purchasing library materials.

The second point we infer, from Table III, is that there are great imbalances regarding the amount of money allocated per student. While Bosphorus University Library allocates the highest percentage, spending USD 200·9 for each student, the amount at Tigris University is USD 12·2 (the lowest percentage rate); this is a 16-fold difference between the two institutions. How can this difference be explained? The answer, we assume, is closely associated with the place of library services within the university and the preferences of the university administration. By the Higher Education Act, the university president has full authority in preparation and execution of the university budget and his/her preferences determine the library budget as well.

Briefly, it can be said that Turkish universities, on the one hand, do not allocate sufficient resources for their libraries. On the other hand, there are very big differences among universities regarding the funds spent for library purposes. The reasons for this situation can be summarized as follows.

International environment

Major parts of the university library materials in Turkey are generally purchased from western countries, especially the USA and the UK. Therefore, the economic and social changes in these western countries are affecting the countries that import books and serials. Turkey, a country that heavily purchases foreign publications, is under the influence of such developments.

The problems derived from economic and social structure of the country

The purchasing power of the Turkish lira has decreased due to high inflation rates since the 1980s. In spite of important annual increases in university and university library budgets, such increases have not been sufficient because of the high increase in exchange rates. The other factor is related to state appropriations, as the state is the biggest contributor to higher education. Nevertheless, current economic policy, namely the market-driven economy, requires reducing public expenditures including education. Such policies have a negative effect on universities.

Populist policies of governments also prevent getting realistic contributions from students. As indicated before, students provide approximately 5% of the expenditures in universities. This ratio should be increased.

The problems derived from universities

There are neither agreed upon traditions nor a consistent library policy in universities. The president of the university has full authority in preparing and spending the university budget. Therefore, his/her attitude is

very important in determining the financial, as well as other resources, allocated to the library. Considering the current situation, with few exceptions, the funds allocated to university libraries by their parent organizations are not sufficient. On the other hand, library expenditures per student, as we have seen in the Bosphorus and Tigris examples, are uneven among the various Turkish universities.

The problems originated from university libraries

Turkish university libraries, except for some public and private institutions, do not have healthy collection development policies that take into consideration contemporary developments. Until recently, apart from classical inter-library loans, there were no effective co-operation programs among university libraries, even between the libraries in the same region.[31] In November 1999, 12 leading university libraries established a university library consortia, called ANKOS (Anatolian Libraries Consortia), for sharing electronic publications.[32]

Conclusion

The examples examined above show that the "money problem" is not local but an international issue for university libraries. Nevertheless, there are differences between the developed and developing countries. First, the developed countries managed to overcome the economic crisis of the 1970s. They are now in a better position to allocate resources for social expenditures. Although university libraries in developed countries have been complaining about financial scarcity since the 1970s, it can be said that they have found alternative sources and methods. Developing countries, on the other hand, are struggling with severe economic problems, which negatively impact the allocation of financial resources for education.

Turkish university libraries, too, are impacted by similar factors that affect the developing countries. The current situation shows that neither government policy nor external conditions are favourable for Turkish university libraries. Yet, there are some precautions that can be taken by universities and their libraries. Universities should find new financial sources in addition to governmental funds. This could include:

- providing new services to earn money,
- receiving comparatively higher tuition fees from students,
- obtaining more alumni support, and
- increasing donations from different sources.

[31] Çakin (1998) *Op. cit.*

[32] Ozbag, C. (2000) ANKOS [online], *http://www.metu.tr/library* [12 April 2000].

In practice, however, there are some social and legal obstacles to applying such methods. Therefore governmental support is necessary to eliminate those obstacles. Otherwise universities will have a deeper crisis because of insufficient funds. If it is possible to obtain extra funds, some part of them can be spent for library purposes.

For overcoming financial problems, the necessity of a fiscal standard for library expenditures within the university is an important issue. It should be remembered, however, that the ratio itself is not enough, since it is in fact an economic matter.

To use available sources efficiently, close co-operation among university libraries should be developed, since it is not possible to become self-sufficient. Therefore, the ANKOS initiative should be supported by libraries and the priority must be given to the "access vs ownership" principle. But, above all, librarians should prove how the library is vital for a university by providing better services for users.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Dr Yasar Tonta from Hacettepe University for his comments and contributions.